

REMARKS

Applicants' undersigned attorney thanks the Examiner for her comments. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this patent application, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks. Currently, Claims 18, 22-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-64, 66-68, 71, 72, 75, 76, 80-82, and 86-88 are pending.

Telephone Interview Summary

Applicant's undersigned attorney, the lead inventor Sridhar Ranganathan, and Examiner Elizabeth Cole conducted a telephone interview on 10 August 2005. Applicants' undersigned attorney would like to thank the Examiner for her courtesy during the interview.

The limitations of Claims 80-82 and 86-88 were discussed, and the Examiner's attention was directed to the data in the table on page 19 of the specification, which demonstrates the novelty of these limitations in view of absorbent webs lacking binder and/or particles of particulate-coated superabsorbent material. The Examiner did not commit to the allowance of any claims.

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 18, 22-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-64, 66-68, 71, 72, 75, 76, 80-82, and 86-88 have been examined with no claims being allowed. Independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 have been amended to include the limitations of the composite absorbent web having an edge compression of below about 1.2 g/gsm, a saturated capacity of above about 18 g/g, and a wet tensile strength of greater than about 0.5 g/gsm/in. Support for these limitations is provided in Claims 80-82 and 86-88. Since these limitations have been incorporated into the independent claims, Applicants respectfully request the cancellation of dependent Claims 80-82 and 86-88.

No new matter has been added by this Amendment. No additional fee is due for this Amendment because the number of independent claims remains unchanged and the total number of claims has been reduced.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103**A. Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook**

The rejection of Claims 18, 22-25, 29-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-59, 63-64, 66-68, 80-82, and 86-88 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Assarsson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 3,901,236, hereinafter “Assarsson”) in view of Dodge II et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,994,615, hereinafter “Dodge”) and Cook et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,562,746, hereinafter “Cook”) is respectfully traversed, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks.

Independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 each recite a composite absorbent web comprising a homogenous mixture of binder and particles of particulate-coated superabsorbent material, with the web having an edge compression of below about 1.2 g/gsm, a saturated capacity of above about 18 g/g, and a wet tensile strength of greater than about 0.5 g/gsm/in. Data is presented in the table on page 19 of the specification showing that a coated SAP composite (sample 1) in accordance with the invention possesses all of the properties recited in the independent claims, whereas a sample having uncoated superabsorbent particles (sample 3) and a sample having uncoated superabsorbent particles and no binder (sample 2) have very different properties falling outside the range of properties recited in Applicants’ independent claims.

Assarsson discloses an airlaid material that includes coated superabsorbent particles (SAP) without any binder. The coated SAP is included to *enhance the rate of absorption*. Because the material lacks a binder, the material lacks wet integrity, i.e., wet tensile strength. The combined benefit of enhanced capacity, flexibility, and strength provided by the webs of the present invention are not anticipated by Assarsson.

Dodge discloses a surge material that may be assisted by a multifunctional material. The multifunctional material serves as a buffer between surge and distribution layers and includes non-coated, *slow-rate* SAP and a binder. There is no suggestion to employ the binder from the multifunctional material of Dodge in the fast-absorbing airlaid material of Assarsson because these materials provide different functions and, consequently, their individual components are not interchangeable. Furthermore, the SAP in Dodge is “slow rate” SAP, which further slows the rate of absorption, thus further teaching away from any interchangeability between the individual components in

the fast-absorbing airlaid material of Assarsson and the slow-absorbing multifunctional material in Dodge.

Cook discloses a combination of fibers and a high concentration of SAP in an absorbent structure. A polyvalent cation-containing compound on the fibers makes the high concentration of SAP feasible. There is no suggestion in Cook that would lead a person skilled in the art to modify the materials in either Assarsson and/or Dodge to achieve a composite absorbent web having exceptional flexibility, saturated capacity, and wet integrity, particularly by combining a binder with particulate-coated superabsorbent material. More particularly, the composite absorbent webs of Applicants' claimed invention have a combination of properties not achieved by, or even recognized as being desirable by, Assarsson, Dodge, and Cook, alone or in any combination.

For at least the reasons given above, Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook fail to disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

B. Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook and further in view of Radwanski

The rejection of Claims 26-28, 60-62, 71-72, and 75-76 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook as applied to the claims above, and further in view of Radwanski et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,939,016, hereinafter "Radwanski") is respectfully traversed, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks.

Although Radwanski discloses meltblown elastomeric fibers incorporated in airlaid webs, and the addition of layers to a web, Radwanski fails to overcome the deficiencies of Assarsson, Dodge, and Cook. More particularly, none of these four references, alone or in any combination, disclose or suggest incorporating meltblown and/or elastomeric fibers into an absorbent web that includes a binder and a coated SAP, or into any web having the combined flexibility, saturated capacity, and wet integrity of Applicants' recited web.

As explained above, a combination of the coated SAP in Assarsson with the binder in Dodge would be repugnant to the intended purposes of the

materials in these references. Furthermore, neither Cook nor Radwanski provide any suggestion or motivation to combine a binder and coated SAP, nor any suggestion or motivation to strive for the flexibility, saturated capacity, and wet integrity of Applicants' recited web, either through routine experimentation or direct application.

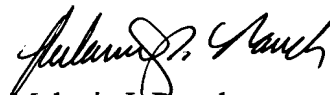
For at least the reasons given above, Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook as applied to the claims above, and further in view of Radwanski, fail to disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicants intend to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action. If the Examiner detects any issue which the Examiner believes Applicants have not addressed in this response, Applicants' undersigned attorney requests a telephone interview with the Examiner.

Applicants sincerely believe that this Patent Application is now in condition for allowance and, thus, respectfully request early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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